



# Joint News Release

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Putnam, Lee call for student protection “now, not later”

WASHINGTON – Additional protection for students from school employees who are sexual predators is long overdue, said U.S. Representatives Adam Putnam (R-Fla.) and Chris Lee (R-NY) today. The two congressmen joined in introducing the Student Protection Act of 2009. The measure would establish uniform rules for dealing with accusations of sexual abuse by school employees and a nationwide database of those convicted of such crimes.

“Let’s call these cases what they are: sexual assaults,” said Putnam. “Now, before we read about another teacher assaulting yet another student. Before another family has to deal with the emotional and psychological damage caused. Before another classroom or school is shaken by another breach of trust. Now -- not later -- let us give schools the tools they need to keep repeat sexual offenders from preying on students within the very institutions that should be a safe-haven for our children.”

“Schools should be a place of safety and learning, not danger and abuse, for our kids,” said Lee. “Those who take advantage of our students and engage in inappropriate behavior shed a terrible light on the overwhelming majority of teachers who give so much of themselves to their profession. It is unacceptable that there is no mechanism in place to keep track of these offenders should they try to retain their teaching certificates and seek a position in another district or state. The Student Protection Act would change that by giving administrators and school boards the tools they need to ensure these predators never step foot in a classroom again. Congressman Putnam is to be commended for his leadership

in drawing national attention to this problem, and I appreciate the opportunity to work with him to protect our students and parents.”

Putnam first introduced a version of the Student Protection Act in 2007. Shortly after its introduction, the Associated Press completed a nationwide investigation of sexual abuse cases by teachers and other school employees. The AP study found thousands of mishandled cases and even incidents in which those convicted of sexual misconduct with students in one district were able to repeat the abuse in another district.

The Student Protection Act was endorsed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Several states have moved to establish statewide guidelines, but federal legislation is needed to establish a nationwide system and database to ensure perpetrators do not have the ability to move freely from one school district to another or from one state to another..

Since 2001, Putnam has represented Florida’s 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, which includes most of Polk County and portions of Hillsborough and Osceola counties. Lee was elected to Congress in 2008, and represents seven Western New York counties.